DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 298 569 CS 506 341

AUTHOR Bishop, Robert L.; Boles, Wendy Gotchel
TITLE Osage Avenue Is Burning: The Influence of Race upon Crisis Public Relations in Philadelphia.
PUB DATE Jul 88
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (71st, Portland, OR, July 2-5, 1988).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Historical Materials (060) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Blacks; Mass Media Effects; *News Media; *Police Community Relationship; Publicity; *Public Relations; Racial Bias; Urban Problems
IDENTIFIERS Black Newspapers; Media Coverage; Media Government Relationship; *MOVE (Group); *Pennsylvania (Philadelphia)

ABSTRACT

A study examined public relations aspects of the police confrontation and bombing of the revolutionary Black group, MOVE, in Philadelphia, in which 11 persons were killed, 250 were left homeless, and 61 homes were destroyed. It explored if and how race affected the crisis and whether Black media and general media were treated differently. City public relations personnel and journalists were interviewed. Press coverage was checked in "The Philadelphia Inquirer," the major newspaper in the city, and "The Philadelphia Tribune," the leading Black newspaper. The most important guideline for crisis public relations is that public relations managers must be included in policy planning and debate and that competent public relations managers have contingency plans for various potential emergencies, strikes, storms and other disasters. After the crisis erupts, it is necessary to first gain control of the informational crisis by controlling access to the scene. Findings showed that Philadelphia ignored clear warnings of impending crisis and almost completely failed to follow professional guidelines in preparing for and coping with the MOVE crisis. The careless manner in which the crisis was handled seriously hurt Philadelphia's reputation. Although the police public relations office has been improved, the city must develop a comprehensive crisis plan involving each departmental public relations unit, the interaction of these units with each other, and the chain of command. (Three tables of data are included.) (RAE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED298569

OSAGE AVENUE IS BURNING:

THE INFLUENCE OF RACE UPON CRISIS PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PHILADELPHIA

By

Robert L. Bishop

and Wendy Gotchel Boles

University of Georgia

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Robert L Bishop

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS506341

2 BEST COPY AVAILABLE

OSAGE AVENUE IS BURNING: CRISIS PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PHILADELPHIA

Robert L. Bishop and Wendy Gotchel Boles
University of Georgia

Few cities have faced so severe a crisis as when Philadelphia police bombed a revolutionary black group, MOVE. Eleven were killed, 61 homes destroyed, and 250 left homeless.

This study examines public relations aspects of the confrontation. How did race affect the crisis? Were black media and general media treated differently ?

City public relations personnel and journalists were interviewed. Press coverage was checked in The Philadelphia Inquirer, the major newspaper, and The Philadelphia Tribune, the leading black newspaper.

CS506341

OSAGE AVENUE IS BURNING:
THE INFLUENCE OF RACE UPON CRISIS PUBLIC RELATIONS IN PHILADELPHIA

Robert L. Bishop
Wendy Gotchel Boles
University of Georgia

INTRODUCTION

Urban violence, including mobilization of the armed forces, is no stranger to the United States. But few cities have faced a crisis so potentially damaging as when the police force of Philadelphia, acting with the consent of a black mayor, bombed a house occupied by a defiant back-to-nature group, MOVE. Police and neighbors had not reckoned with an aerial attack which ended with the death of 11 people, the destruction of 61 homes, and 250 people homeless. (Starr and Underwood, 1985, 22.)

This study examines the public relations aspects of the confrontation. Of particular interest were questions of the influence of race. Did the race of the MOVE revolutionaries, their neighbors, and the mayor affect the way in which the crisis was handled? Were there differences in treatment between black media and general circulation media?

Interviews, both personal and by telephone, were held with public relations personnel in the mayor's office, police department, and fire department, and with reporters and editors. Press coverage was also examined through a content examination of The Philadelphia Inquirer, the major city newspaper, and The Philadelphia Tribune, the city's leading black newspaper. The daily Inquirer has a weekday circulation of 519,621, while the Tribune, published three times weekly, has a circulation of 13,231. (Figures from the 1986 IMS Directory of Publications.)

BACKGROUND

MOVE was founded in 1972 in the Powelton Village section of Philadelphia by Vincent Leaphart and Donald Glassey. Leaphart, a poorly educated black, was a handyman. Glassey, a young white, had recently earned a degree in social work from the University of Pennsylvania. First known as the American Christian Movement for Life, and as Community Action Movement, the group later shortened the name to MOVE, short for Movement.

MOVE believes that humans should live in harmony with other life forces, including dogs, cats, rats and roaches living off the garbage and human excrement which they pile into their yards rather than using city facilities. They were not known for harmony with their neighbors, however, frequently harassing them with electronically amplified threats and obscenities. (Gibbons, et al, 1985, 10).

We wish to acknowledge gratefully the help given by Professors Roland Page and Bruce Swain.

Described by its founders as a "powerful family of revolutionaries, fixed in principle, strong in cohesion, steady as the foundation of a massive tree," (Africa, 1975, 17), the group first attracted attention by protests of everything from public education to pet shop conditions. (They do not believe in laws, schools, reading or writing.) Their most publicized stunt was handcuffing television talk-show host Mike Douglas in his studio after a show in which an unruly chimp was handcuffed and tranquilized to keep it quiet.

Leaphart changed his name to John Africa and later changed the surnames of all his followers to Africa. MOVE was predominantly black, and probably never included more than 100 people. (Trippett, 1985, 18). Despite a poor education and an IQ estimated at 79, John Africa dictated to Glassey more than 300 pages of anti-technology beliefs, which became known as The Book or The Guidelines. (McCoy 18). Members attended classes twice a week to study The Book and were required to take part in activities, usually protests which resulted in arrests. At these times, Africa was careful to stay in the background. (McCoy, 22).

Glassey, the white social work graduate, was arrested in 1977 on a federal firearms charge. To escape prosecution, he turned informant, charging that Africa was stockpiling weapons. He brought in 20 bombs, bomb parts, two shotguns, eight rifles, and one handgun which he said had come from MOVE members' homes. Africa was charged with conspiracy and with manufacturering and possessing bombs. Not found for several years, he then successfully defended himself in a surprising court case. (McCoy 24).

The Philadelphia police and MOVE had their first armed confrontation at the MOVE compound in Powelton Village in 1978. Members lived in a large abandoned Victorian home and neighbors were complaining about the accumulation of garbage and rats. MOVE members also brandished weapons while shouting at passers-by. After spending more than $1 million to watch the house for ten months, the city decided on a blockade to starve MOVE out. The besieged continued to receive food in some unknown manner, but agreed after 50 days of blockade to move within three months. When they did not, 21 arrest warrants were issued and 300 police officers were called to evict the group.

When MOVE refused to leave, the porches and the house front were torn down. In the firefight, one police officer was killed; ten other officers and firefighters injured. Only when the house had been torn down and the basement filled with water did the occupants surrender. Twelve adults, eleven children and more than 50 dogs were removed, but John Africa was not among them.

Philadelphia's mayor at the time was Frank Rizzo, known as a hard-nosed, no-nonsense former cop. Police were filmed by local television crews, beating Delbert Orr Africa, after Officer James Ramp was killed. Delbert and eight other MOVE members were convicted of the murder of Officer Ramp and are serving sentences

ranging from 30 to 100 years. All charges against the officers involved in the beating were dropped by the presiding judge.

These prison sentences have been the focus of MOVE protests since 1978. MOVE members believe that Officer Ramp was killed by police gunfire and demand the release of MOVE members.

After the battle John Africa's sister, Louise James, began caring for the jailed members' children, in her home on Osage Avenue. (Morganthau, p. 25) Neighbors at first welcomed the children, but adult MOVE members began to occupy the home as well, including Ms. James' son, Frank Africa. According to Ms. James, on John Africa's order, Frank once beat his mother in front of other members because another person had disobeyed John Africa. Later Frank again beat his mother on John's order, this time asking if he wanted her "cycled," or killed. Louise James moved out and never returned. However, after the bombing she refused to repeat her allegations and filed suit for the destruction of her home.

Osage Avenue homes are typical Philadelphia row homes, with common side walls. Neighbors soon began complaining of the smell, rats, and insects. MOVE set up an outdoor public address system, shouting obscenities through the night. They also ran across the rooftops, scaring the residents and causing some damage. A MOVE member wearing a black executioner's hood once appeared on a rooftop carrying a shotgun. Twenty-five police officers were called, but the man disappeared back into the MOVE house. No arrests were made. (Heidorn, 1985, 7).

After three years of futile complaints the neighbors, all black, took their problem to the press. On May 1, 1985, they condemned Wilson Goode, Philadelphia's first black mayor.

Goode was considered one of the most promising black politicians of the late 1980's (Wilentz, 1985, 22). The son of a North Carolina sharecropper, he had become the city's managing director under Mayor William Green (Loeb, 1985, 13). When Green retired, Goode won the mayoral election with 25 per cent of the white vote and 98 per cent of the black vote. In office, he selected a cabinet including both white and black city leaders.

The Osage Avenue residents were met by a statement from Mayor Goode that he did not believe there were any violations warranting an arrest. This was disputed by District Attorney Edward Rendell, who said his office had provided enough evidence for police action. (Zucchino, 1985, 13.) A city council member disclosed that MOVE owed a gas bill of more than $1,000 and a water bill more than $500. The press also reported that all calls involving MOVE were to be sent to the civil affairs unit. Uniformed officers were not to be sent to the Osage Avenue block.

One week later, however, Mayor Goode referred to preparations to take legal action. He also said that the city would move only when he felt there were sufficient grounds.

(Cooke and Kaufman, 1985, 1B). Four days later the city evacuated 500 people from the neighborhood.

First the city tried negotiations. The director of Philadelphia's Crisis Intervention Network met with MOVE members, who said they would cooperate only after their jailed members had been released. (Trippett, 19). They refused to relocate to a farm which the city offered to furnish. All hope ended on May 12 when MOVE spokesman Jerry Ford Africa sent out the message: "We are ready for you. Come and get us." (Trippett, 19)

At daybreak on May 13, Police Commissioner Gregore Sambor mobilized 150 officers. They were to use high-pressure water jets from the fire department to dislodge a fortified bunker from the building's roof, and then to drop tear gas into the house. MOVE had boarded up all windows and doors and lined the basement walls with tree trunks salvaged from city cutting in a nearby park. (Starr and Underwood, 23).

Police met taunts and a short spat of gunfire, which set off a 90 minute barrage during which the city used at least 10,000 rounds (Special Investigation Commission Report, 12). More bullets had to be brought from the Philadelphia Police Academy.

All day police attempted to break in the front door, to drill holes in the exterior walls through which to insert tear gas, and to break through to the basement from an adjacent house. Each time they were repelled by gunfire. (Trippett, 19). MOVE friends and relatives took turns on bull-horns, pleading for members to come out or to send out the children.

In the early afternoon Mayor Goode, Commissioner Sambor and Managing Director Leo Brooks ordered an aerial attack. A police officer in a State Police helicopter dropped an "entry device" onto the rooftop bunker. Thirty seconds later, an explosion could be heard and seen, but the bunker was not destroyed.

The "device" contained two one-pound sticks of Tovex TR-2, an explosive used in underground mining and in the 1980 rescue of hostages from the Iranian Embassy in London (Holmberg 1985, 3). The bomb may also have included an unknown quantity of C-4 explosive, given to the Philadelphia Police Department by an agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Commissioner Sambor said that police tests showed no evidence that Tovex would cause a fire. However, the manufacturer says Tovex explosions create heat from 3,000 to 7,000 degrees F. (Trippett, 8).

Twenty-two minutes after the bomb was dropped, flames were seen on the rooftop of the MOVE house. Approximately 19 minutes later, the Police and Fire Commissioners decided to let the fire burn until the bunker was destroyed. The fire department did not begin putting water on the house until shortly after the bunker fell through the roof, 43 minutes after the first flames.

Because of possible small arms fire, water cannons were used

from an adjacent street. The fire was not fought conventionally until 9:30 p.m., almost four hours after flames were first seen.

The fire spread through the entire block. When it was finally declared under control at 11:41 p.m. (two hours and 11 minutes after conventional efforts began), 61 homes had been destroyed, 250 people left homeless, and eleven occupants of the MOVE house killed.

Public Relations Organization

Fire Department No specific person was assigned media relations during the MOVE episode. Captain Angelo Saggiomo, administrative assistant to Commissioner William Richmond, was media contact person during office hours. After hours, the official spokesman is the senior officer on duty at the scene. For major fires, one officer is assigned to gather facts for the senior officer, who then briefs reporters. Commissioner Richmond stated that the department attempts to verify all information before release.

All news releases written by Saggiomo's office during the MOVE fire were forwarded to Jim Murray in the mayor's office of communication for approval and release. Murray then distributed the releases and coordinated press conferences, usually with the mayor, police and fire commissioners present. Contrary to policy, statements were released before verifying the facts with police and fire officials at the scene.

Minority hiring has been stepped up; 78 percent of fire-fighters are white, 16 percent black and six percent other minorities. According to the 1980 census, 18.7 percent of Philadelphians are black, the largest ethnic minority.

Captain Saggiomo was a line officer before becoming administrative assistant, and received only on-the-job training in media relations. Departmental public relations are only a small portion of his duties.

Police Department Neither the fire nor police department was included in decision-making before the confrontation. According to Detective Jerry Whartenby, a 20-year police veteran, the public affairs office had no warnning of the serious situation. Public affairs people did not arrive at the scene until Monday morning, the day the shooting started. The press had begun setting up observation posts within the cordoned-off area on Sunday. No press area was set up, and reporters congregated at the barricades. The one news release given to the media was distributed around eleven o'clock, before the fire. Commissioner Gregore Sambor acted as spokesman because he was in charge.

Thereafter the mayor directed that information be released only through his office. With his approval, a joint news conference was held on Tuesday morning.

The police had no public affairs unit until 1980, when a

civilian, Don Fair, was appointed. Fair attributes his success to his civilian status, coupled with the high status afforded by the police commissioner. Also, Fair was a local journalist with public relations experience. When he resigned in 1983, however, the mayor could not find a civilian for the one year left in the mayor's term. Therefore the job was turned over to police officers. (Following a change in commissioners after MOVE, another unsuccessful try was made to find a civilian, but at least the job was given to police officers with journalistic training.)

During MOVE, the public affairs office included one captain, one detective, and one secretary. Enlarged to one captain, one detective, and one officer, plus a part time secretary, it now is empowered to issue news releases without prior approval, except for policy changes. The unit also writes speeches for the Commissioner and an internal police publication.

Racially, the department is made up of 76 percent white officers, 18 percent black, and six percent other minorities.

The Mayor's Office The mayor's office of communications is responsible for writing articles and speeches for the mayor and other city offices. The mayor also has a press secretary who acts as his spokeswoman. The communications office was given no warning of the MOVE battle, but did take over responsibility for media relations by assigning only one man, Jim Murray.

Murray set up a communications office at the scene on May 14, the day after the fire. All information regarding MOVE was coordinated through Murray who held four media briefings each day for about ten days. For three weeks he maintained the communications center, helped by another city public relations employee and a secretary. The Cobbs Creek Recreation Center, where the media office was located, also served the burned-out neighborhood, including information booths about housing, financial aid, and centers to receive donations. This remained open for six weeks, manned by about 100 city employees.

Murray escorted reporters through the debris several times while bodies and weapons were being recovered and the rest of the block demolished. According to him, there were no special releases for the black press, since neither the city nor the Tribune considered MOVE a racial story.

Media Reaction to Public Relations Efforts The majority of journalists surveyed gave very low marks to the mayor's office, the police, and the fire department. Mike Freeman, Philadelphia Daily News city editor, said there was no "organized, coherent public relations response." He called the public relations effort "hopelessly muddled," and said the police public relations officer "was nowhere to be found" during the fire fight, and then refused to talk to anyone from the media.

Inquirer reporter Robert Terry agreed, calling police media relations "terrible," as did Daily News reporters Joe O'Dowd and

Tyree Johnson, a black who lived in the area. Inquirer reporter William Marimow, a two-time Pulitzer prize winner, called the mayor, police and fire departments "equally unhelpful."

Most positive responses, interestingly enough, came from the black Tribune, possibly because of its much smaller staff. Reporter Irv Randolph called the effort of the mayor's office of communication "very profitable" immediately after the bombing and fire. Tribune editor Paul Bennett felt all three departments were cooperative.

Several journalists found the coordination of information through one office very helpful, though a television reporter found the timing of releases very poor.

Most of the reporters surveyed agreed that news releases became more timely and frequent after the city organized its public relations response. Several raised questions of accuracy, though most believed that contradictions were not intentional. Both Mike Freeman, city editor of the Daily News and Kitty Caparella, a reporter for the same paper, cited Police Commissioner Sambor's change of story during a press conference. According to them, Sambor first reported that officers were involved in a gunfight in an alley behind the MOVE house. In the middle of the conference he left the stage, returning several minutes later to say officers did not fire at anyone in the alley.

According to Caparella, Mayor Goode said that he directed that the fire be extinguished at 6 p.m. Other officials gave later times. Inquirer reporter Robert Terry summed it up: "Somebody is not telling the truth."

Most reporters seem to think it would not have made much difference who was in the public relations hot seat. The key, they said, is access to information, which depends on the public relations person's personal status in the city structure.

News Coverage

Extent The Philadelphia Inquirer published 522 items concerning MOVE in the three months between May 1 and July 31, 1985. The Tribune published 138 items, proportionately less because of its frequency of publication. By far the biggest play came immediately after the confrontation, when public relations efforts were at their lowest.

Twenty-five percent of the items from each publication were coded by two persons, with an inter-coder reliability of .9460. Coverage was classified according to article type, placement, length, and opinion concerning city performance in articles, headlines, and editorials.

The largest number of items for the Inquirer was photographic (37.7 percent). This was followed by background news (29.1 percent) and hard news (13.6 percent).

Table 1
NEWSPAPER COVERAGE BY TYPE OF ARTICLE

	Tribune	Inquirer
Photos	18.6%	37.7%
Background	19.6	29.1
News	17.4	13.6
Columns	19.6	4.2
Editorials	5.1	2.3
Letters	15.2	8.0
Graphics	--	4.0
Ad	4.3	0.4
Total	99.8	99.0

Perhaps reflecting its character as a supplemental paper catering to a special group, the Tribune gave 19.6 percent of its coverage to background news and the same amount to opinion columns. Hard news accounted for 17.4 percent and letters for 15.2 percent. This distribution also implies that the readers of the Tribune had more opinions about the incident, due to their closer identification and involvement with the problem.

A breakdown of coverage by length indicated that most of the Inquirer's space (40.1 percent) went to background news. The biggest space category for the Tribune was for photographs. The Inquirer gave 27.4 percent to photos and 20.4 percent to news.

Table 2
NEWSPAPER COVERAGE BY SPACE

	Tribune	Inquirer
Photos	22.3	27.4
Background	22.1	40.1
News	21.2	20.4
Columns	20.1	4.7
Editorials	4.8	1.0
Letters	6.0	2.7
Graphics	--	3.1
Ad	3.0	0.1
Total	99.5	99.5

The Tribune gave approximately equal amounts of its MOVE space to pictures, background, hard news, and opinion columns. It used no graphics other than photographs.

The Tribune's average background news article was approximately 600 words long, while corresponding Inquirer coverage was a bit more than 900 words. Tribune editorials were substantially longer, but Inquirer hard news stories were longer.

It was hypothesized that Tribune coverage would show more negative attitudes toward the city. This was sustained. Some

48.6 percent of items in the black paper were anti-government, 44.2 percent were neutral, and 7.2 percent positive.

Corresponding figures for the Inquirer were 17.1 percent anti-government, 78.7 percent neutral, and 4.2 percent favorable. Similar distributions were found for headlines.

We may speculate that the black newspaper printed a higher proportion of anti-government materials because its audience was more involved in the tragedy, because of a long-standing lower opinion of government, and because of its traditional role as opinion leader as well as impartial purveyor of information. The fact that its staff was more appreciative of the public information help offered by the city was not sufficient to change the coverage materially. As shown below, Tribune columnists were more anti-government, anti-police and anti-mayor than the Inquirer. The fact that the mayor was black and holding to his job by a narrow margin did not deflect criticism.

Table 3
TONE OF OPINION COLUMNS

	Tribune	Inquirer
Anti-government	37.0%	31.8%
Anti-mayor	18.5	4.5
Anti-police	11.1	9.1
Anti-fire	--	--
Neutral	22.2	45.5
Pro-government	7.4	9.1
Pro-mayor	--	--
Pro-police	--	--
Pro-fire	3.7	--
Totals	99.9	100.0

Immediately before the bombing, the Inquirer printed a higher percentage of negative coverage. Immediately after, Inquirer coverage became less negative while Tribune coverage became more so. Again, this difference probably reflects different purposes and audiences.

Inquirer had the largest portion of letters to the editor which criticized government as a whole (35.0 per cent). Letters criticizing the mayor accounted for an additional 11.1 per cent and the police department was the subject of criticism in 4.4 per cent of all letters. There were no letters critical of the fire department.

Letters which could be coded as pro-government amounted to 8.9 per cent, to which should be added 13.3 per cent in favor of the mayor.

For the Tribune, 23.8 per cent of letters were anti-government as a whole, 10.0 per cent anti-mayor, and 10.0 per

cent anti-police. The only pro-government letters were 14.3 per cent in favor of the mayor.

Headlines were much more apt to be neutral in tone -- 62.0 per cent of Tribune heads and 86.0 per cent of Inquirer heads were judged to be neutral. Anti-government sentiments were expressed in 31.9 per cent of Tribune heads but only 11.8 per cent of Inquirer heads. Pro-government headlines accounted for 5.5 per cent and 2.3 per cent.

Findings and Conclusions

First, let us set out some generally accepted guidelines for crisis public relations:

Perhaps the most important rule is that public relations managers must be included in policy planning and debate. In a democracy, one must continually be aware of how organizational decisions are going to be received by the media and the public. As far as one can tell, public relations was considered a minor responsibility for all departments concerned. Otherwise, there would have been serious planning for the communication aspects of the MOVE confrontation, and particularly before aerial bombing.

Second, regardless of what level it is placed, competent public relations managers will have contingency plans for various potential emergencies. Little seems to have been done for civil emergencies, strikes, storms or other disasters.

After the crisis erupts, one must first gain control of the informational crisis. Generally this includes controlling access to the scene and:

1. Defining what guidelines and restrictions will be imposed on the media.

2. Identifying a single spokesperson.

3. Defining exactly what the spokesperson is authorized to release.

4. Being absolutely certain that the information released is accurate and does not compromise your organization legally or ethically.

5. Setting up separate teams to cover fact-gathering, media contact, telephone operations, and clerical operations.

6. Providing at least two contact people, available 24 hours a day. Contact people must have media credibility (Smith 1979, 17).

The most fundamental error was excluding public relations from early decisions. Communiciations people from the mayor's office, fire department and police department were not involved

prior to the crisis. The fire commissioner was not told of the planned action until May 11, two days before the bombing, because city officials considered the confrontation a police action. This caused a lack of coordination which hurt during the first day of fighting because no one was prepared for a media stampede.

In an urban crisis such as this one, little can be done to control the flow of information to the media. While police blockades were set up to keep civilians out of the area (including reporters), the journalists were well ahead of their would-be protectors. Reporters had already gone into the neighborhood, renting apartments as lookout posts and carrying mobile telephones in case service should be cut off. One television camera caught the entire bombing sequence, broadcasting the explosions believed to have ignited the house.

The Tribune, while unable to field as massive a reporting corps as The Inquirer (60 reporters), had stronger ties with the community. It is simply not possible to exclude the press from such a disaster, as it was in the Falkland Islands or during the invasion of Grenada.

But information may be controlled by providing fast, accurate reports from the organization's point of view. The media tend toward neutrality or even toward favoring the government, as long as that is possible. But if the public relations practitioner (or his substitute) stumbles or stonewalls, reporters will be all over him, like trout on mayflies.

The quality of information gathered and released by the city could have been improved. Besides trying to handle reporters on an ad hoc basis, the public information officer had to cope with slow information from line officers. Often reporters were much better informed.

According to Daily News reporter Joe O'Dowd, press relations and police cooperation were "horrendous." Between the start of fighting and the burning of the neighborhood, only one press release was given out -- a one-paragraph statement that a police action was, indeed, under way. (Storm, 12).

A Tribune reporter said that it is always hard to get information from police because of the antagonism between press and police. Most police press representatives have no previous journalism experience and tend to answer 'No Comment!" before the question is spoken (Randolph 1987).

Some crisis information may have to be withheld for legal or ethical reasons. But it enhances an organization's credibility to release its own story as part of the first reporting. When information is not controlled, it may be directed.

The city could have benefitted by releasing information about problems with MOVE before acting. For example, a television story on MOVE and its neighbors, coupled with pictures of

the filth in which they lived, would have made an eviction more acceptable, though no public relations efforts could explain a bombing and the burning of a neighborhood. Surely a competent adviser, whether public relations or not, would have proposed less destructive ways of punching holes in the walls so that tear gas could flood the house. Even a tank or a bazooka would have been under better control!

Mayor Goode made little effort to explain why he had been reluctant to evict MOVE. His excuses that no violations had occurred were weak, and were refuted by other public officers, indicating that he did not control his own administration, much less control Frank Rizzo, who would later oppose Goode in the 1987 mayoral race. (Goode won by the slimmest of margins.)

The city was slow to react even after the siege began. The only public relations officer on hand was from the police department. Adding to the confusion, the police commissioner, fire commissioner, and city managing director were all acting as spokesmen. After the fire began, Leo Brooks, city managing director, finally became the sole spokesman. His job includes oversight of both the police and fire departments and so he was technically correct in acting as spokesman. However, it would have helped the Goode administration if a media center had been organized immediately and staffed by trained public information officers.

Too many spokesmen and a poor flow of communication to the command post caused many inaccuracies in the city's information statements. Much of the misinformation was corrected after the fire, but it had already been printed and broadcast.

One example, particularly damaging to police credibility, was their report of rescuing 13-year-old Birdie Africa. According to police, Birdie came out of the back of the MOVE home and came toward police lines. Another male came out of the house and fired at police, according to their account. Ignoring the gunfire, police ran down the smoke-filled, partially flooded alley, rescuing Birdie who had fallen face down into a pool of water. The gunman disappeared.

However, fire fighters in second story windows above the alley heard no gunfire when Birdie and the only other survivor, Ramona Africa, left the house. Birdie said that the other male whom police saw did not have a gun. (Marimow and Kaufman, 1).

After the bombing, Jim Murray, the public information officer from the mayor's office of communication, became responsible for media relations and began to introduce some order. Setting up a communications center near the fire, he began to issue media briefings, coordinating all information from the city departments. Inaccuracies were either caught before release or corrected quickly. A Tribune reporter said that the office was extremely cooperative and released information in a timely fashion. The reporter agreed with the concept of a single

spokesman because it made covering the news easier. Also, city officials held a record number of press conferences in the two weeks following the bombing and usually took questions rather than just reading a statement.

To summarize, more negative material was found in the black newspaper, in spite of the fact that its staff was more appreciative of public relations help and in spite of the fact that the mayor and a proportional number of the police and fire department were black. It cannot be assumed that black media will automatically support black politicians, though they are much more likely to do so if the incident is viewed as racial, which the Tribune did not.

Second, media relations did improve markedly when a central spokesman with professional skills was established, though a one man staff is quite inadequate for 24 hour coverage.

Third, no preparation of public opinion could overcome the excessive force resulting in the destruction of so many homes.

We conclude that Philadelphia ignored clear warnings of impending crisis and almost completely failed to follow professional guidelines in preparing for and coping with the MOVE crisis. The careless manner in which the crisis was handled seriously hurt Philadelphia's reputation. Although the police public relations office has been improved, the city must develop a comprehensive crisis plan involving each departmental public relations unit, their interaction, and the chain of command. Correcting these serious inadequacies may help the city regain its title of the City of Brotherly Love.

REFERENCES CITED

Africa, John. On the MOVE: From the Writings of John Africa. The Philadelphia Tribune, 28 June 1985, 17.

Cooke, Russell and Marc Kaufman. Mayor calls situation with MOVE 'explosive', Philadelphia Inquirer, 9 May 1985, B1.

Gibbons, Thomas J., Jr., et al. MOVE house is bombed. Philadelphia Inquirer, 14 May 1985, 1.

Loeb, Vernon. After worst day of his career, Goode moves aggressively. Philadelphia Inquirer, 15 May 1985, 13.

Marimow, William K. 3 firefighters saw it differently behind MOVE house. Philadelphia Inquirer, 28 July 1985, 1.

Morganthau, Tom and Anne Underwood. The Mysteries of MOVE. Newsweek, 27 May 1985, 25.

Philadelphia Special Investigation Commission, Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations. 1985.

Starr, Mark and Anne Underwood. Did It Have to Happen? Newsweek, 27 May 1985, 22-26.

Trippett, Frank. It Looks Like a War Zone. Time, 27 May 1985, 16-22.

Wilentz, Amy. Goode's intentions. Time, 27 May 1985, 22.

Zucchino, David. Digging Out the ... Why. The Quill, January 1986, 10-17.